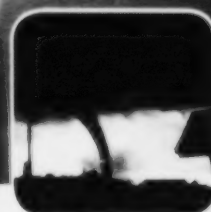


FIREnews

VOLUME 29 | #01

FEB 2008

FOR PARTNERS IN EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT IN ALBERTA



New emergency planning component unveiled

Planning for disabilities in emergencies

January 21, 2008 was the kick off of an important component of emergency planning in Alberta – a workshop on emergency planning for persons with disabilities and information about a new course offering from the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA).

Alberta Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister Ray Danyluk opened the session on behalf of his department and Alberta Seniors and Community Support. Over 140 people attended the unveiling, including staff from AEMA, the Office for Disability Issues and the Premier's

Staying informed

Included in this issue of *Alberta FIREnews* is a letter and a question & answer document reflecting the recent meeting between the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association and the Alberta Emergency Management Agency. Although the information was mailed out, we want to make sure that everyone gets a copy. If the insert is missing, please contact Gloria Mercer at 780-415-0548 (dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside of Edmonton).

Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, representatives from disability organizations and agencies,

municipal chief administrative officers, elected officials and emergency planners.

Held at the Chateau Nova Hotel in Edmonton, the workshop included the unveiling of a new course developed through collaboration between the PCSPD and the AEMA. Titled *Including Persons with Disabilities in Emergency Plans*, the course is designed to assist municipalities in ensuring that persons with functional needs are included in emergency plans.



Participants at the Emergency Planning for Disabilities workshop.

SEE NEXT PAGE FOR RESOURCES

For more information about the course, please call the AEMA at 780-644-4811 (toll free by first dialing 310-0000) or visiting www.aema.alberta.ca

Alberta

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Disability Evacuation Plan: Development & Training for Emergencies (DFD 107)

Meeting the standards prescribed in the Americans with Disabilities Act, this video offers a program user guide and two DVDs or VHS tapes covering the two main areas: "Developing Your Plan" and "Executing Your Plan."

Practice For Life: Safe Escape for Senior Citizens and the Disabled (DFD 097)

This video details safe fire evacuation procedures from homes, high-rise apartments and assisted living communities. The video stresses planning, practice and prevention and is a must see for the elderly and all health care personnel who deal with the elderly.

Life Safety and Evacuation: Teach Safety and Security Staff How to Plan For and Conduct a Safe Evacuation! (DFD 045)

Minimize the likelihood of injury and death in an emergency by making this informative DVD part of your training program. Life Safety and Evacuation shows viewers what the person in charge of life safety for building occupants needs to know and how to conduct a thorough and complete evacuation.

Fire Prevention in the Office (DFD 104)

Among all the safety problems an employee can encounter, fire can be the most frightening. Every year industrial fires cause hundreds of millions of dollars in damage and result in hundreds of employee injuries, a number of which are fatal. Yet many employees do not realize how their own actions can contribute to the risk of fire. The videotape includes information on:

- common causes of industrial fires and how to prevent them
- the concept of "flash point", "classes" of fires and fire extinguishers
- handling flammable materials and evacuation
- first aid and other employee responsibilities

Managing Director's Message

Introducing the AEMA

Reporting directly to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Managing Director of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) and his staff lead the co-ordination, collaboration and co-operation of all organizations involved in the prevention, preparedness and response to disasters and emergencies to ensure the delivery of vital services during a crisis. These organizations include government, industry, municipalities and first responders.

AEMA is accountable and responsible to the Government of Alberta, to Albertans, to their communities and to industry for the protection of people, their property and the environment from the effects of emergency events.

Many of the key players are the same, and while they may have new titles or new



Dave Hodgins,
Managing Director

office locations, their goals are still focused on providing quality and efficient services to their stakeholders. In many instances, roles have been expanded to better utilize knowledge, experience and expertise - the end result will be an exceptionally high functioning organization that is prepared for and meets the needs of Albertans.

The primary goal is to bring clarity to the system and we need the help of everyone to make the AEMA a world-class emergency management and response system. I look forward to your input and involvement as we continue to carve out the workings of the AEMA. 📌

Dave Hodgins
Managing Director

Creating a unique entity for Alberta's first responders

It's an exciting time for Alberta's fire service and first responders. The formation of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) is providing the impetus to combine and solidify our resources, our goals and our dreams. We are creating a unique entity that enables us to join all aspects of Alberta's safety system, and the fire service is a critical component of this system.

AEMA is more than just a new name that provides the same services to our stakeholders. Rather, it creates the opportunity to build upon and enhance the services provided and to increase resiliency into the agency so that we can be responsive to the ever-changing needs of our communities, our fire services and other stakeholders. It requires continued development and enhancement of our relationships with the fire service, emergency managers and other agencies and people who have an interest in public safety. Recent meetings with the board of the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association are early steps in the development of comprehensive communications processes to ensure that our stakeholders are heard and have the ability to provide input.

Interesting opportunities to shape the direction of the agency are coming quickly as we look at new strategies for the delivery of services to protect Albertans and our visitors. Provincial dangerous goods strategies, specialized rescue services, ground search and rescue initiatives and addressing chronic concerns about sustainability are just a few of the key program areas being rolled out in the next few months. We will be looking to all of you for your support, guidance and contributions.

I am continuing to champion programs for responders, including occupational health and safety initiatives, critical incident stress management programs and other critical responder and community support programs. We are also continuing to be a central coordination point for investigation and inspection processes and incident reporting systems. This is another area of major consultation and work in the next few months. It will include the evaluation of current practices, development of new ones and formally putting into place the new Significant



Ernie Polson
Acting Fire Commissioner, AEMA

I am continuing to champion programs for responders, including occupational health and safety initiatives, critical incident stress management programs and other critical responder and community support programs.

Incident Investigation Team. Partnerships, collaboration and sharing will be critical to the success of this initiative.

As we move into 2008, safety, sustainability, inclusivity and engagement will be the key words guiding our work. We cannot build the AEMA without commitment to these principles. I look forward to the opportunity to work closely with everyone as we move forward. I thank you in advance for your support and involvement. 🙏

A stylized handwritten signature of Ernie Polson.

Ernie Polson
Acting Fire Commissioner, AEMA

Condemned to succeed

If you have heard or read the quotation "condemned to succeed" somewhere in your journeys, then, like me, you may have found it appropriate to our role as emergency management professionals. Last fall, I had the opportunity to present to a delegation from China. Unique differences in our cultures aside, the visit reconfirmed our zero tolerance for loss of life or negative impact to infrastructure and the environment in emergencies. As emergency managers, the expectations from the public and our leaders are high in that we will not fail.

And yet, while we are charged with public safety, it is in fact the responsibility of every citizen to understand the hazards and take the appropriate action to prevent, mitigate or be prepared. With this in mind, one of our roles is that of influencing a "culture of preparedness" in our communities. So what social trends are we attempting to influence?

Our best lessons have been learned the hard way and over time we have course-corrected to deal with certain hazards. As we move into the future, there is little support for making mistakes and

this expectation especially transcends into the complex hazards, which tend to result in serious emergencies and catastrophes. The phrase "risk-based all hazards approach" is an attempt to focus the effort at the front end on hazard and vulnerability identification and risk assessment, resulting in programs that address prevention, public awareness, education and outreach. This attitude is best described as the pay now versus pay later mentality and is best embodied in Manitoba's "Duff's Ditch". Pejoratively named after Premier Duff Roblin by opponents of its construction, the Red River Floodway cost an estimated \$60M (1960 dollars). In at least 20 floods over the past 37 years, the floodway has saved an estimated \$10 billion. Recent efforts in Canmore, Alberta on structural mitigation are believed to have saved \$50M in disaster recovery just last spring. Structural mitigation has enormous potential, but we must be wary that 'Mother Nature' has a way of proving the engineers wrong. In most cases, it is just better to get out of the way.

Non-structural mitigation is where society gets its best bang for the buck. While most references to non-structural mitigation are related to earthquake preparedness and mitigating the risk by strapping household objects down, there is an even greater opportunity to reduce risk outside of existing or planned engineered structures. Programs associated with public education and outreach, such as fire prevention programs, have played an important and significant role in influencing people to make the right choices.

The Emergency Public Warning System, while seen as a response tool, is a form of



Colin Blair, Provincial Director of Emergency Management

non-structural mitigation as demonstrated by its potential in imminent life-threatening events such as Amber Alert. The role of the emergency manager is to influence non-structural mitigation opportunities that support a culture of preparedness.

While most would agree that we live in the "information age", I would argue that we live in the "entertainment age." Our social priorities tend to place preparedness on the backburner and entertainment at the top. At the last World Conference of Disaster Management, a reporter referred to the trade show as the "Big Business of What If." And yet Microsoft invested \$12 billion into capturing 40% of the software gaming industry. Big business? Maybe the real challenge is: how do we make preparedness entertaining?

As our demographics shift, the flags are being raised on the aging population and the impact to knowledge management, the declining volunteer population and the transient attitudes being demonstrated in the job market. It is easy to get overwhelmed with the issues. But I would put to that our 'vital ground' is the family unit. If, collectively, we can influence a culture of preparedness there then it will be easier to sleep at night knowing we are condemned to succeed. 🙏

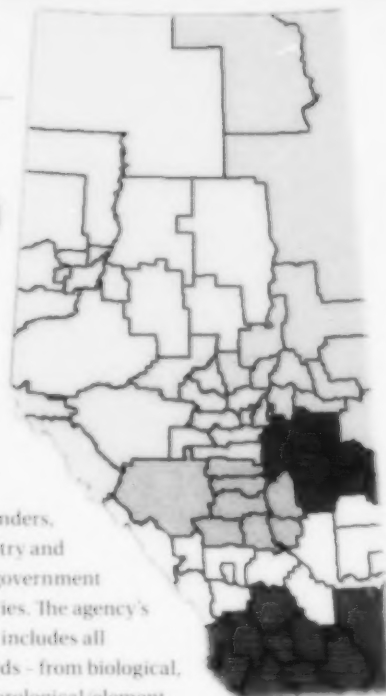
A stylized handwritten signature of Colin Blair in dark ink.

Colin Blair

Provincial Director of Emergency Management

While most would agree that we live in the information age, I would argue that we live in the entertainment age.

Creating Alberta's world-class emergency management system



THE START OF A NEW YEAR is often an exciting time. Many people see it as a new beginning or the opportunity to enhance something that was started previously. That is certainly the case with the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA). Under the direction of Dave Hodgins, who joined the agency as managing director in May 2007, he and his staff have been working at almost warp speed to establish the parameters of the agency. Starting with a 100 day plan, staff and stakeholders created a vision as well as a framework for how the agency would work, what its parameters were and how best to encompass the following AEMA mandate:

We are accountable and responsible to our government and to Albertans for effectively ensuring the protection of people, their property, their communities, their industry and their environment from the effects of emergency events.

A tall order perhaps, but one that Managing Director Dave Hodgins and his staff are focused on and well-experienced to achieve.

The initial concept of the AEMA emanated from one of the recommendations put forth by the Environmental Protection Commission that reviewed the Wabamun train derailment to develop a senior agency. This concept was further developed through one of Alberta Premier Ed Stelmach's five priorities – provide safe and secure communities. As Minister of Alberta Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Honourable Ray Danyluk was charged with accelerating the implementation of the Emergency Preparedness Initiative. With public safety established as a Government of Alberta priority, the agency has been given three key priorities:

1. saving lives,
2. protecting property, and
3. protecting the environment.

"This is a significant paradigm shift from the old way of doing business, and it provides a new approach as well as new expectations," said Hodgins. "But that is not unusual. Working as a larger team rather than as individual silos is an approach that is being implemented by various segments of government and industry. Much like the reforms in health care to create a multi-disciplinary team approach, the agency supports the whole emergency management system, including response and providing support for responders."

The emergency management system is a concept made up of real entities, noted Hodgins. It includes hundreds of organizations and a wide range of informal and formal connections. "The agency must be at the heart of the system to coordinate and facilitate its effectiveness. We serve as the coordinating agency and work closely with subject matter experts and supporting and/or logistics agencies," added Hodgins.

"It is encouraging to have the Alberta Emergency Management Agency promote a common incident command system and language that all emergency response agencies are able to use to service Albertans," said Brad Pickering, Deputy Minister, Alberta Sustainable Resources and Development. "While SRD mobilizes resources somewhat independently to suppress wildland fires with a priority placed on community protection, which of course is a shared responsibility, the alignment of all provincial agencies involved with emergency preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery through the overarching Alberta Emergency Management Agency will make us stronger and more effective. AEMA exemplifies the saying that the whole is much stronger than the sum of its parts."

The agency's partners include a broad cross section of everything from international, national and provincial organizations to municipal and First Nations, first

responders, industry and non-government agencies. The agency's focus includes all hazards – from biological, meteorological/element and geological hazards to human induced hazards, such as from non-intentional events resulting from human error or system failure to intentional events that result from civil unrest, terrorism, international tension, criminal acts or war.

"As the organization responsible for saving lives and protecting property and the environment, our focus is all encompassing," stated Hodgins. "In order to do it effectively, though, we need to work in close partnership with the various organizations, agencies and committees involved in emergency management."

In fact, one of the first things Hodgins did when he joined the agency was to meet with many of the key players. In addition to organizations involved in emergency management, he also met with deputy ministers of government departments that traditionally weren't involved with fire or emergency management.

"The creation of the agency is an enormous task, but one that is going to create a bigger and better system of emergency management for our province. We need the help of everyone in the EM arena to make the agency the best it can be," noted Hodgins. "By being better connected, we are going to be able to enhance the level of service across Alberta." 🏠

New and improved way of doing business

Taking a calculated approach to changes has resulted in significant benefits for fire incident reporting.

In early 2007, the then Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO), now the Alberta Emergency Management Agency, invited a group of insurance industry representatives to discuss the introduction of the Fire Electronic Reporting System (FERS). The idea was embraced by the representatives so the FCO proceeded with the development of the electronic forms in FERS. Before its

final launch, User-Acceptance Testing was conducted in September 2007 with an initial group of representatives. The feedback from the testing was incorporated into FERS and *milenet* master agreements were sent to insurance/adjuster company chief executive officers in December 2007 to sign up for FERS. The success of the testing resulted in including all insurance companies in the program.

"In addition to making it easier for insurance agencies to report fires to meet their

mandatory requirement, FERS increases accuracy and timeliness of fire incident reporting. The electronic format also makes it easier to match fire reports and insurance reports, which results in more accurate coding and dollar loss figures," said Mahendra Wijayasinghe, Manager, Research & Analysis. 

For further information on insurance FERS, please contact Gloria Mercer at 780-415-0548 or gloria.mercer@gov.ab.ca

Alberta's Emergency Management System (AEMA)

Charting the course for AEMA

Alberta is at the start of a very significant change in emergency management in Alberta. While major strides have already been made in terms of developing the framework of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA), there is still a lot to do. Over the next two years, the agency, working together with a broad range of stakeholders, will be charting the course that will exist for the next 20 years.

Defining the emergency management system is the critical task to be undertaken. Considering the complex systems in place to support public safety such as fire services, police, EMS and municipal and government services, the emergency management system will need to address not only cross

pollination of education on roles and responsibilities, but also factors such as time and space before, during and after events and relationships between the key partners.

"Communication and education are integral components of the agency," acknowledged Dave Hodgins, Managing Director of AEMA.

"Two-way communication is critical to our collective success. We need to work with our partners and stakeholders and we need to hear from and act upon their input. Equally important is the education process. We need to ensure that everyone understands the role of the agency and how it works with our various partners. We also need to work with our partners to ensure that everyone involved has or develops the skills needed to work within the Alberta emergency management system."

This will include a number of working groups that will help define the emergency management system in Alberta, define the education to support the system and advance cultural change as part of accelerating

the emergency preparedness initiative. One of the first steps is to create the policy framework and legislative review of the *Emergency Management Act* in spring 2008.

Based on feedback from some of the stakeholders and partners, communication efforts to date are already enhancing relationships, as evidenced by the words of Eric McGhan, Deputy Minister of Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security. "I am very impressed with the recent and most positive changes that the AEMA has made to better inform and serve the people of Alberta. I'm enjoying a renewed level of cooperation between AEMA and the Solicitor General and Public Security department which again enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of services to all Albertans."

Echoing similar sentiments, Jay Ramotar, Deputy Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, added "I look forward to working with David and his staff as they formalize a vision for the agency, and implement the new Alberta Emergency Plan." 

Contact information for the agency is:
Phone: 780-422-9000
(toll-free in Alberta, call 310-0000)
Fax: 780-422-1549
E-mail: aema@gov.ab.ca
Internet: <http://aema.alberta.ca>

AEMA at a glance

The agency's executive team consists of:

- Dave Hodgins, Managing Director
- Spence Sample, Assistant Managing Director, Strategic Corporate Services
- Ernie Polsom, Acting Fire Commissioner
- Colin Blair, Assistant Managing Director, Preparedness Services & Provincial Director of Emergency Management
- Colin Lloyd, Acting Assistant Manager, Community & Support Services

As the agency responsible for safety and emergency management, AEMA is responsible for four key functions across Alberta – mitigation/prevention; preparedness; response; and recovery.

Introducing new AEMA staff

In addition to the relocations, the agency has also added a few new staff, including:

Michael Shykora – Fire Safety Officer for the Northwest Region. Mike came from the Peace River Fire Department and brings a strong background in fire and EMS operations as well as fire investigations and inspections. Mike has also recently been heavily involved in regional cooperative efforts to assist the MD of Clear Hills to provide a high level of training to their firefighters.

Lisa Sherman – Senior Policy Analyst. Lisa comes to the agency from Alberta Justice and the Attorney General where she has been providing policy and research services to their Business and Planning Services Branch. Lisa has achieved her Masters degree in Criminology from the University of Ottawa and can converse in both of Canada's official languages.

Mark Murphy – new District Officer for the South District. Mark moved to the agency from Alberta Environment, where he worked as an Emergency Response Officer on the ASERT team. He helped establish the ability of the ASERT team to effectively respond in support of communities to incidents presenting a threat to the environment. Before that, Mark spent 20 years with the Canadian Forces.

Judy Blakney – Assistant to the Acting Fire Commissioner and Assistant Managing Director, Strategic Corporate Services. Judy has been an Administrative Assistant to the Director, Family Support for Children with Disabilities with the Ministry of Children's Services for the past five years. During her years with Children's Services, Judy liaised with various departments, parents and stakeholders to provide services and support for children with disabilities and their families.

Offices on Jasper Ave and in west Edmonton

In addition to the evolution of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA), other government changes have necessitated staff relocations. This includes the creation of a headquarters office for AEMA.

No longer on the 16th floor of Commerce Place, agency staff are housed either in the Canadian Western Bank Building on Jasper Avenue or at the AEMA office on the west end.

Listed below are the locations for agency staff. The headquarters office includes AEMA executive, policy group and corporate services staff, who are located at:

Canadian Western Bank Place
Suite 2810, 10303 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 3N6

AEMA staff located at the west end location in Edmonton (14515 - 122 Ave.) include Consequence Management, Business Continuity, Training, Community Services, Disaster Recovery, Research and Analysis, Public Education, Fire Statistics Information System and Fire Commissioner – Operations.

Alberta Emergency Management Agency

Contact information for the agency is:

Phone: 780-422-9000

Fax: 780-644-1044

Fax: 780-422-1549 (West end)

AEMA BCP Emergency Activated Line

1-866-205-9161

CIC: 1-800-272-9600

Jacen Abrey – Fire Safety Officer for Lethbridge. Jacen has 22 years in the emergency services field as a firefighter, EMT-A and command officer. He came to the agency after seven years as the Chief of Cardston County Emergency Services (now covering the Town and County of Cardston, the villages of Glenwood and Hillspring, the southern portion of the Blood Tribe Reserve and Waterton National Park) which, during his tenure, has grown to become one of the busiest emergency service operations outside a major centre in Alberta.

Cecily Roper – Emergency Management Officer within the Business Continuity section of AEMA. Cecily has a great deal of experience having worked within various ministries, most recently with Tourism, Parks, Recreation & Culture where her portfolio included Business Continuity and Enterprise Risk Management. In addition to her extensive training within emergency management and business continuity, she is an active volunteer in the community and has assisted AEMA in the past by participating in various working groups and AEMA hosted events.

Lynnette Berscheid – Administrative Support in the Managing Director's Office working alongside Lisa Bienvenue. Before

coming to the agency, Lynnette's previous employment experience included working in the Assistant Deputy Minister's Office of the Public Safety Division and in the private retail sector with extensive management and administration experience.

Tim Chander – as Public Affairs Officer for the AEMA, Tim is responsible for providing communications advice and support to the agency. Tim worked with Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security since 2005 and prior to that honed his communications skills working in the Information and Privacy Commissioner's Office. Tim brings with him a wealth of experience in media relations, communications planning, writing and issues management.

Although not new to the agency, **Sharon Brisbin** accepted a position as the Manager of Issues and Strategic Services, a newly created position that reports to the Managing Director. Sharon gained an extensive background in policy development and implementation, as well as strategic planning in her previous positions at CSIS, Transport Canada and FINTRAC. She has also had the opportunity to learn a great deal about Alberta's emergency management systems and processes during her time at Emergency Management Alberta in Risk Analysis and Mitigation. 📌

Provided below is contact information for AEMA management staff and their assistants.

NAME	POSITION	OFFICE	CELL
Dave Hodgins	Managing Director	780-422-6591	780-887-9755
Lisa Bienvenue	Assistant to the Managing Director	780-422-6592	780-983-6815
Colin Blair	Asst. Managing Director, Preparedness Services & Provincial Director Emergency Management	780-427-8644	780-914-5601
Sharon Kruger	Assistant to Provincial Director, Emergency Management	780-644-4931	n/a
Karen McAree	Manager of Training & Preparedness Services	780-427-8633	780-868-5931
Greg Carter	Director, Consequence Management	780-415-0914	780-913-6101
Humyra Sabir	Manager, Business Continuity	780-427-8621	780-920-7769
Mahendra Wijayasinghe	Manager, Research & Analysis	780-415-0546	780-720-4973
Spence Sample	Asst. Managing Director, Strategic Corporate Services	780-644-4808	780-886-1751
Sharon Brisbin	Manager, Issues and Strategic Services	780-644-4810	780-405-7043
Colin Lloyd	Acting Asst. Managing Director, Community & Support Services	780-415-9003 & 780-644-2128	780-983-6795
Barrie Brand	Acting Director Community Services/Senior Coordinator Disaster Recovery	780-427-8627	780-405-5342
Ernie Polsom	Acting Asst. Managing Director of Provincial Services/Acting Fire Commissioner	780-415-0549	780-720-4905
Judy Blakney	Assistant to the Fire Commissioner	780-644-5031	n/a
Kevan Jess	Acting Assistant Fire Commissioner-Operations	780-644-5031	780-910-0133

AEMA's new website

Finding the information you need

WITH THE INTEGRATION of the Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO) with Emergency Management Alberta into the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA), a new website has been created. Provided below is information about where to find some of the essential information to ensure that your access to important materials continues uninterrupted. The new website address is www.aema.alberta.ca. Please update your bookmark with this URL.

Regional AEMA staff

If you are looking for the regional office map that was on the former FCO website, the contact information can be found under the "About AEMA" tab, and then click on "Contact Us" on the left side. This will bring

up the interactive map which has the tables with both the Fire Safety Officer and District Officer contact information for each area.

Fire incident reporting

If you are looking for the fire reporting forms and manual, they can be found under the "Programs and Services" tab at the top of the screen, and then by clicking on "Community and First Responders Services" on the left side. From there, go down to the "Fire Reporting" section and click on it. This will bring up the page that has the Fire Statistics Reporting Manual as well as all the forms in PDF format. If you have Adobe Writer, you can save the reports after they have been filled in. If you don't have Adobe Writer, you can either complete the reports and print them, or print the blank copies of the reports, complete them by hand and then submit them to the Alberta Emergency

Management Agency, Fire Statistics Unit, 14515-122 Avenue, Edmonton, AB T5L 2W4 or by fax to 780-422-1549.

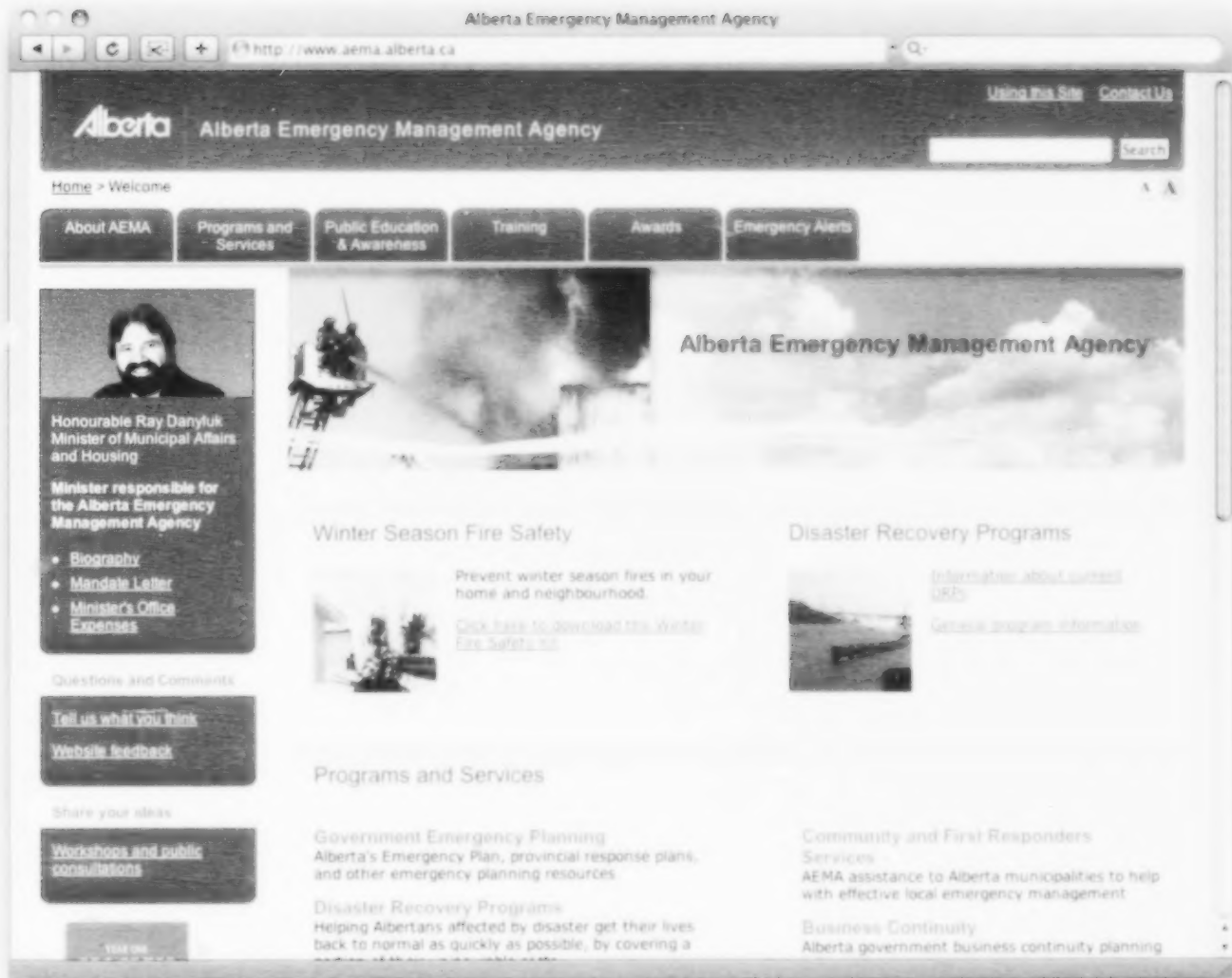
Public education

Please click on the "Public Awareness and Education" tab on the top of the screen to access public education campaigns, audio-visual library, free publications and other resources.

Other information

Most of the information you are used to seeing under the "Fire Department Operations" area of the previous FCO website is now under the "Programs and Services" tab on the new website.

Please check back often because we will be adding material and resources regularly to better serve the fire protection community. 🙌



Navigating problems through the new website?

If you have any problems navigating through the new website or have any questions, feel free to contact:

- Ernie Polson, Acting Fire Commissioner at 780-415-0549, ernie.polson@gov.ab.ca
- Mahendra Wijayasinghe, Manager, Research & Analysis at 780-415-0546, mahendra.wijayasinghe@gov.ab.ca
- Gloria Mercer at 780-415-0548, gloria.mercer@gov.ab.ca

The AEMA website also contains considerable information about emergency management, including the following:

- Information about Alberta's disaster recovery program at www.aema.alberta.ca/ps_disaster_recovery_program.cfm
- There is also information about government emergency plans as well as other emergency management plans at www.aema.alberta.ca/ps_gov_emergency_plans.cfm

Other material included on the AEMA website – all fire and emergency management campaigns, fire and emergency management fact/tip sheets and 72hours Emergency Preparedness information

Check it all out!

Improving communication through exercise

BY ADAM ARMITAGE-CONWAY, Emergency Management Officer, AEMA

The Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) is accountable and responsible to the government, to Albertans and their communities and to industry for the protection of people, their property and the environment from the effects of emergency events. In fulfilling this mandate, the agency carries out simulations or exercises to ensure government is able to respond to potential emergencies. Provided below is a brief account of an exercise conducted recently that reflects the hazards and risks associated with the petrochemical industry in the province, and how the emergency response system can activate during an emergency.

The scenario: "Exercise Persistent State" simulated a massive pipeline rupture in central Alberta, creating plumes of toxic gas carried by wind and water. In total, the simulated plume affected over 15 municipalities and hospitalized over 1,000 people. Concerns about the effects of the plume resulted in simulated closing of the QE2 highway for over four hours, and travel bans in west-central Alberta.

The aim of the exercise was to evaluate the revised Petroleum Industry Incident Support Plan (PIISP), signed into effect by the Managing Director of AEMA and the

Chair of the Energy and Utilities Board in August 2007. The plan is a revision of the Upstream Petroleum Incident Support Plan (2002), which included the incorporation of the provincial government's restructuring in 2007 and the removal of non-Alberta government task lists.

The essence of the plan is that, upon notification by the EUB of a serious incident in the oil and gas sector, eight provincial departments will be notified and will begin to coordinate communication. Other departments are brought in as needed. In this exercise, all Government of Alberta departments were involved. The participants included Consequence Management Officers, who are liaison officers from individual ministries brought together to commit resources to a provincial emergency response. Their primary role is interdepartmental communication.

The simulation team was made up of representatives from Alberta Health and

The Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) is accountable and responsible to the government, to Albertans and their communities and to industry for the protection of people, their property and the environment from the effects of emergency events.

Wellness, Alberta Environment, AEMA and the Energy and Utilities Board. During the eight-hour exercise, they simulated 80 events in the field that would have ramifications in the Government Emergency Operations Centre (GEOC). If the incident meets a series of criteria for measuring major events, or affects more than one municipality, the GEOC is activated, and coordination of the provincial response moves to that location.

The primary goal of the PIISP is to support first responders on site. In this scenario, due to the size of the plume, there were several affected communities across central Alberta requiring support and information.

Going forward, the Alberta Emergency Management Agency will integrate lessons learned from the exercise into operational procedures and prepare for the next year of exercises and training events. 🏠



Participants taking part in the Exercise Persistent State simulation exercise.

Creating a solution that works

Continuing our series of articles on recruitment and retention within the fire service, this issue we focus on the City of St. Albert Fire Department.

Given Alberta's competitive labour market, and the fact that about 20 per cent of staff have the option to retire in the next three to five years, the City of St. Albert Fire Services realized it had a real issue on its hands. To deal with the situation, the department made a concerted effort in the areas of recruitment and retention strategies.

With over 31 years of service, John Hynes, Deputy Fire Chief of Operations for the City of St. Albert Fire Services, says he's seen a lot of changes in the profession over the years. One of the more recent changes was the way in which new staff was being hired. "Candidates have mentioned in their interviews, when asked why they want to work for us, that they have spoken to someone in our department at a career day or visited us in the fire stations to find out more information," said Hynes. "They make a conscious effort to seek us out after they complete their education."

Hynes says that in the last couple of years, his department has been directly recruiting new staff at post-secondary institutions and even high schools. "With a targeted approach, these open houses and career days have proved to be extremely beneficial," added Hynes. "We are able to promote our integrated fire service and sell the young people on the service as a career."

Hynes admits that the fire department didn't always use the direct method of recruiting. He says that the idea came from the amount of traffic he saw coming into his office or from phone calls. In fact, it was the interest from people walking in that prompted the department to create a team and start having members go into schools to promote the profession while working on presentations and career days.

"This allows us to provide a role model for those considering this field as a career. Having members in the schools makes

it easier for students to approach the individual to learn about what he or she does on a daily basis," explained Hynes.

A related initiative is bringing interested students into the fire hall where they can get first-hand experience; something that Hynes says is starting to produce results. "For the first time in our department's history, we are employing a generation of firefighters that are St. Albert residents, born and raised. That tells me that our efforts in getting out into the community have paid off," added Hynes.

The department is also working on their website and others because that's one way to reach the younger generation. Hynes advises that they have a team dedicated to exploring new mediums for getting the message out about their fire department and is confident that the team will continue to come up with some excellent recommendations.

These new approaches of getting the message out appear to be working. Given the tremendous growth of the city and his department, Hynes estimates that he will be looking to fill 10 new positions in 2008. With anywhere from 100 - 150 applicants from across western Canada, Hynes is confident the department is well recognized as a quality service and people will want to work and live in this community.

"We have good protocols and often due to our size we are able to and are willing to try new techniques," he noted. "St. Albert has become known for having top-notch equipment. Young people looking for new challenges will likely stay with us because we have a strong integrated program that allows our staff to use a variety of skills and techniques."

Hynes also sees a silver lining in the department's personnel situation. "Some of the newer employees will have the opportunity to progress quite quickly, preparing for the officer's exam in five years. Five years after that, these employees may potentially move up to the position of lieutenant," he explained.

"In our department, there is lots of room to move as we continue to grow and expand. And as we do that we are looking for ideas from our members. We are challenging them to look for innovative ideas for effective succession training, and I think they like that."

Another move the department has made in formulating plans to clearly identify new employees is developing a path to advancement in terms of courses and training. This will ensure that by the time a member has reached the deputy chief's position, he or she has the broadest scope of training possible.

In competing for applicants, Hynes strives to make the process as easy as possible. "We are processing our recruit candidates using a point system where each area is based on education, training and experience. Also, when a potential candidate goes through our recruit program, no monetary value is placed on the individual until the very end. For example, the practical skill test, short interview and medical scenarios will have no cost value for the candidate. However, each of those steps will have a weighted value and if that mark has not been met, the candidate will not proceed to the next level, which is the stress test, full medical, driver's abstract and in-depth oral interview," Hynes advised.

All of these changes have come from a complete assessment of the department. "With a lot of new faces at the front and bottom end, we're taking the next step in positive growth - ensuring that once they're in our department, they're here to stay," Hynes stated. 

For more information about the recruitment and retention efforts at the City of St. Albert Fire Department, contact John Hynes, Deputy Fire Chief of Operations at 780-459-1566.

Grants available to help protect communities from wildfire

CIVIC LEADERS ENGAGED in the fight to reduce the risk of wildfire to their communities are encouraged to apply for a Government of Alberta grant.

The FireSmart Community Grant Program provides municipalities with funding up to \$50,000 per year to reduce the risk of wildfire through a variety of initiatives. Projects may include community protection planning, vegetation management and FireSmart education programs.

As Alberta's population continues to grow and expand into the province's forested areas, the risk of wildfire threatening homes and communities also increases. In October 2007, the world watched as a series of devastating wildfires burned across southern California, taking lives, forcing the evacuation of more than one million people and destroying nearly 1,500 homes.

Preventing similar devastation in Alberta is the primary goal of the FireSmart program. The FireSmart Community Grants help municipalities prevent wildfire losses within their communities.

Since its introduction in 2005, close to \$700,000 in FireSmart grants have been distributed to 24 forest-area communities. These grants funded planning, educational programs advancement, development, training, interagency cooperation, legislation development and vegetation management.

Applying for a FireSmart Community Grant is straightforward. To qualify, communities must be:

- located within Alberta's Forest Protection Area (visit www.srd.gov.ab.ca/wildfires/pdf/munic_map2007.pdf), and
- defined as a municipality, municipal district, county, Métis Settlement or registered non-profit society (such as a community association).

Grant applications are assessed according to the wildfire threat to the community, demonstrated support for the FireSmart program and a local equity contribution to the FireSmart initiatives identified in the application.

To assist communities in putting together an application, wildfire prevention officers are available in the 10 Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (SRD) area offices located throughout the province. To find the SRD office nearest you, call 310-0000.

The application deadline for 2008 FireSmart Community Grants is June 16, 2008. 🔥

For more information about the program visit www.srd.gov.ab.ca/wildfires/firesmart or contact Tracy Price at 780-644-3298 (toll free by first dialing 310-0000)

AFCA update

Changes taking place with AFCA

BY BILL PURDY, *Executive Director AFCA*

Since the last issue of the *Alberta FIREnews*, the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association executive committee decided to cancel the conference in Fort McMurray. One of the key reasons was that the conference hotel could not accommodate our needs. The trade show usually has 90 - 100 trade booths; in Fort McMurray the hotel could only provide 45 booths. As a result, registration would have had to increase due to high conference room costs. We also determined that a number of fire departments could not attend due to the higher costs. For many departments on small operational budgets, Fort McMurray was out of the question. I would like to thank Glenda Dales, second vice president, and Chair of the conference committee, along with our outside consultant as well as Jeff and Kevin from the

Fire Services for Wood Buffalo for their time and effort on this event.

The Association was fortunate that we could move the conference to Edmonton, at the Mayfield Inn, for the same dates of June 8 - 12, 2008.

In other news, effective December 1, 2007, Dennis and Jean Dubois resigned as the association's bookstore operators. The Board would like to thank Dennis and Jean for many years of dedication. I'm pleased to announce that Blaze Solutions (Allen Mericer) has signed a contract with the AFCA to operate the store. Welcome aboard. Effective December 12, 2007 Idea Market of Lacombe will provide our web services.

The Board of AFCA held a planning session December 14, 2007 and recommendations from the session will be presented at the annual conference.

As the Executive Director for the AFCA, I attended the annual forum sponsored by the Alberta Emergency Management Agency. All the officers of the agencies presented information on their responsibilities to the agency and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing was the keynote speaker. The Minister is very supportive of the fire and emergency services provided by all the fire departments across Alberta. 🔥



February 1, 2008

Dear Fire Chief:

The executive team of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) met with the board of directors of the Alberta Fire Chiefs' Association (AFCA) recently to discuss issues of mutual interest and specifically, the direction of the Government of Alberta regarding public safety and fire services.

The meeting was an opportunity for open and frank discussions between our organizations. The AFCA board members wanted to clarify a variety of information items they had heard through their membership regarding AEMA.

Issues brought forward centered on the direction of the new AEMA and the inclusion of the fire industry as follows:

- the fact the name "Alberta Emergency Management Agency" does not reference fire,
- the perception Emergency Management Alberta has taken over the Fire Commissioner's Office,
- maintaining a focus on fire issues at the annual conference, and
- keeping the fire service involved in AEMA and developments in the public safety system affecting the fire service.

One of the key understandings we took from the meeting is that the AEMA needs to communicate effectively with all partner agencies and stakeholders so they are familiar with AEMA activities and can be engaged in shaping the future look and direction of AEMA roles and responsibilities. We also recognize the fire services are one constant at almost every emergency in the province.

The document attached is the first step in fulfilling our commitment to ensure strong and consistent communications and addresses some of the questions that members offered regarding the AEMA at the meeting. The document is set out in a question and answer format for convenience.

Together, as we move forward, we will continue to work collaboratively to ensure safe and secure communities for all Albertans and we will remain a strong advocate for the important role of the fire services industry in the province.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "David Hodgins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" being more prominent than the last name "Hodgins".

David Hodgins, Managing Director
Alberta Emergency Management Agency

Brian M. McEvoy, President
Alberta Fire Chiefs Association

Attachment

cc: Honourable Ray Danyluk, Minister
Municipal Affairs and Housing

1. **Question:** If fire services are a full partner with the AEMA why is there no reference to fire in the name of the agency?

Answer: Fire services are a very important and key partner of the AEMA. The name of the new agency was not intended to reflect the variety of partners within Alberta's system for managing emergencies, but rather the system itself. Every reasonable effort will be made to add the word fire to the name when the legislation is open for amendments in 2009.

2. **Question:** Now that the previous Fire Commissioner's Office and Emergency Management Alberta are gone what will happen to the Fire Commissioner?

Answer: The former Emergency Management Alberta (EMA) branch and the Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO) have been combined and form the two pillars of the recently created AEMA. While we may have a new name, we want to assure you that there will always be a Fire Commissioner who will continue to play a vital and important role in partnership with all of Alberta's fire services. The same is true of the Provincial Director of Emergency Management who will also continue to do the same with those involved in the emergency management industry.

3. **Question:** Has Emergency Management Alberta taken over the Fire Commissioner's Office?

Answer: No. The previous branches of Municipal Affairs and Housing known as EMA and FCO are the pillars of the AEMA and were combined to take advantage of the many synergies that could be achieved by doing so.

4. **Question:** Why did the agenda at the last "Connecting the Dots" conference in Calgary not contain any fire related topics?

Answer: The first Connecting the Dots conference grew out of the successful Fire Commissioner Annual Meeting held in 2006. Fire Services had expressed a desire for such a meeting in response to the growing need of the fire service to have opportunities to meet and hear from other agencies involved in emergency response. We know many fire services respond to far more non fire related events than to actual fires. They also work with, or rely on, a variety of government and non government agencies to support those responses.

We had assumed that the fire service would be interested in how the AEMA had been structured and what we were doing, so we focused on those issues primarily at the 2007 conference.

We will ensure there are topics pertinent to the fire service at the next conference in 2008 and we will add a stream dedicated to these issues that will be chaired by the Fire Commissioner.

5. **Question:** Why did the Government form the AEMA?

Answer: Alberta's system for managing emergencies, whether routine or catastrophic in scope, is deliberately decentralized in nature and relies on a combination of municipal, industrial, First Nation and Métis, and government organizations for effectiveness. This design allows the majority of important safety decisions to be made quickly and at the level of government closest to the people potentially affected, notably the community or regional level.

The fire service is one of many partners within this system who are indicating a need for greater coordination and collaboration, to realize the system's full potential and to deliver even more effective prevention, preparedness, response and recovery services. This issue was raised in the Safety System Review Report and again in the Environmental Protection Commission Report on the Lake Wabamun event.

Government responded by creating AEMA by combining of the FCO and EMA. The AEMA is tasked with maintaining the previous services offered by those predecessor agencies, but now has an additional new and exciting mission; to ensure the protection of people, their property, their environment and their industry from emergency events in Alberta.

To fulfill this mission, the AEMA is expected to become a champion of system communications and system collaboration. The significant challenge for AEMA will be developing ways to coordinate the entire and very diverse system for managing emergencies in Alberta.

6. **Question:** Are the services that communities, first responders and others have come to expect from FCO and EMA going to remain the same?

Answer: No. We expect that as the AEMA develops, the services we have traditionally provided to support our stakeholders will actually be enhanced. As Alberta grows and the nature of emergency events becomes more complex, so must the strategies we employ to achieve our public safety goals.

The AEMA will work with all system stakeholders through a variety of means, including partnerships and other creative relationships, to find solutions to these demands. We can assure you we will always do so in close consultation with all of those who are or might be affected.

7. **Question:** Are Fire Service stakeholders going to have any influence over how AEMA develops and what it does or offers as services?

Answer: Yes. The AEMA has little or no legislative jurisdiction over the partners within the system and cannot achieve the mission to coordinate the system without significant support from the actual system owners, including the fire service.

The final development of the AEMA, how the system is coordinated and the roles and responsibilities of the various partners within that system will be driven in large part by you as a stakeholder and partner. The detail on the process needed to achieve this level of development has yet to be determined and you will be consulted on that as well.

8. Question: When can we expect to see results from the Agency?

Answer: You can expect to hear from us very soon as we ask you to help guide the development of the AEMA and define roles and responsibilities.

There has already been much activity within the Agency and some key projects initiated.

Our Critical Event Response Plan is partially in place and you can expect to see AEMA field staff moving out early in an event to be closer to the community in case we are needed. We are not an emergency response agency so this evolving program is designed to allow the AEMA to be fully ready to assist with resource acquisition if and when you need it. We are connected directly to the Minister and through him to the Premier, so the full weight of the province can be brought to bear much more quickly when required.

We are also in the process of fully developing the Alberta Readiness and Response Centre. When fully functioning, this centre will help coordinate the government response to your emergency needs, track incoming events and make immediate decisions on how best to respond to support your needs. It will also act as a one call depository of emergency event information and will keep all system partners informed.



Working groups continue making progress

FIPEN, the Fire and Injury Prevention Educators' Network, is a collaboration of the former Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO), now the Alberta Emergency Management Agency, Alberta fire/emergency services and the Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research (ACICR) who have been tasked with examining current risks to Albertans in terms of fire and unintentional injuries and recommending preventative strategies.

In 2007, the FIPEN Steering Committee set priorities for fire and unintentional injury risks facing Albertans. The five priorities are:

1. seniors (high risk of fire death and falls)
2. home/residential fires and injury issues
3. arson and vandalism fires
4. motor vehicle-related injuries
5. injuries among teens and young adults

The steering committee formed five working groups to tackle these priority issues and to recommend strategies and potential roles that the fire/emergency services in Alberta can play in public fire safety and injury prevention education. The working groups have been meeting to further discuss the issues and narrow the scope of their work.

The Motor Vehicle-Related Injuries Group identified occupant restraints as the priority and has partnered with the Alberta Occupant Restraint Program to develop concrete recommendations. The group has identified three potential activities for the fire services which include supporting on-going communications efforts, assisting with special targeted communications campaigns and getting involved with an education project with local enforcement authorities. The next steps for this group include developing a timeline, required resources and evaluation plans for the recommended strategies.

The Home/Residential Fires and Injuries Group met and narrowed the scope of their work to a smoke alarm/home safety inspection program and an after-the-emergency program. This group has completed a review of data and literature about the issue and is currently beginning to plan the strategies.

The Arson and Vandalism Fires Group met and selected four issues on which to focus: juvenile fire setters; broad education about the public's role in preventing and reporting arson; construction site arson

prevention; and arson and vandalism in First Nations communities. This group is currently reviewing the data and literature on these topics.

The Seniors Working Group has decided to focus on falls and will be working with a falls prevention network to further flesh out the plan.

The Injuries Among Teens and Young Adults Group has not yet met but will convene in the new year.

FIPEN is committed to making recommendations on strategies that are feasible at the local level, are consistent with messages already in place in Alberta, that build upon existing programs and that hold promise for effectiveness. FIPEN welcomes the involvement and expertise of all fire and injury stakeholders across Alberta. 🏠

For more information on FIPEN or to contribute to FIPEN activities, please contact Mahendra Wijayasinghe, Manager, Research & Analysis, Alberta Emergency Management Agency at 780-415-0546 or Mahendra.Wijayasinghe@gov.ab.ca.

2007 Fire Prevention Week wrap up

Summing up Fire Prevention Week activities

Last October, Alberta communities large and small participated in a variety of Fire Prevention Week (FPW) activities related to the 2007 FPW theme of "Its Fire Prevention Week: Practice Your Escape Plan". The theme set the stage for Albertans to create a fire escape plan and practice it with family members. Based on the various events that took place across the province by the fire service and the media, the 2007 campaign was a great success.

With support from ATCO Gas, ATCO Electric, the FCO and the involvement of 328 fire departments across Alberta, students in grades K-3 had the chance



Fire Prevention – Brendan Dolan, VP of ATCO Gas and Sheldon Grant award Mir Kim and his father Domyeong Kim with top prize in the 2007 Alberta Fire Prevention Week contest. Kim won a new computer in the contest. — Justin Brisbane/Canmore Leader

to enter a contest for a home computer system. The winning student was Mir Kim at Elizabeth Rummel School in Canmore. Mir's school and homeroom teacher also each received a \$200 cash prize. Trent West, AEMA Fire Safety Officer, Calgary Office, assisted the award ceremony in cooperation with Canmore Emergency Services. 🏠

Digest

In memoriam

It is with much sadness that we announce the death of Glenn Latimer on January 17, 2008. Glenn's career as a firefighter included serving as Deputy Chief for the Town of Westlock and Fire Chief for the County of Westlock. Provided below is an excerpt from Ernie Polsom's speech at Chief Latimer's funeral.

"Immediately upon meeting Glenn I was aware that this was a man who approached life head on with a directness that spoke of strong convictions and a strong sense of purpose.

He was a committed fireman. He served his communities long and he served them well. His leadership has helped ensure that the fire departments serving this area were staffed, trained, equipped and supported allowing them to provide high levels of service to those in need. Glenn championed the cause

of the volunteer fire services in the provincial forum, lending his experience, knowledge and passion to the greater safety system. We valued his opinion and I believe he relished the opportunity to share it. Glenn was at his best in front of a group of children teaching them how to be safe from fire and emergencies. He traveled the province sharing his passion and knowledge with them. He spearheaded fundraising to purchase a fire safety trailer and single handedly hauled it around the province asking little except the opportunity to teach our most precious resource, our children, how to be safe, how to look after themselves and others in case of fire. The legacy that Glenn leaves for us is the challenge to continue the good work he started and championed." — Ernie Polsom

Fires in Aboriginal communities – a new perspective

A manual recently developed by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) provides an interesting perspective on fires in Aboriginal communities. The manual was developed by speaking with volunteer firefighters in 10 different Aboriginal communities. The results of these discussions were organized into case studies, each describing the prevention efforts of a particular community. Among the many topics discussed in the case studies are candle safety, chimney maintenance, arson prevention and the beginning and growth of a volunteer firefighting squad. CMHC hopes that volunteer



Canada

firefighters and housing managers from Aboriginal communities will identify with many of these stories, getting new ideas and inspiration

USFA releases behavioural mitigation of cooking fire report

The U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) announced that it has completed a report and accompanying educational tools on behavioural mitigation of cooking fires. The report, Behavioral Mitigation of Cooking Fires Through Strategies Based on Statistical Analysis, and accompanying educational videos and presentation are the result of a USFA partnership with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) to develop sound, research-based recommendations for behavioural mitigation strategies to reduce cooking fires in the United States and the resulting injuries and deaths. To view the report, visit www.usfa.dhs.gov/fireservice/research/other/cooking-mitigation.shtm.

Agency regulation approved

The Government Emergency Management Regulation (GEMR) was recently approved by the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta. Replacing the old Government Emergency Planning Regulation, the GEMR ensures that the roles and responsibilities of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency are articulated, and that emergency planning for government is updated with tasks allocated to government departments.

Moving on ...

Jack MacIntosh, Fire Chief for the Banff Fire Department, retired in mid October 2007.

Gary Mauch, Fire Chief for Medicine Hat, retired in December 2007.

Rick McCullough, Alberta Fire Commissioner, resigned in December 2007.

Sharon Robins, Emergency Management Officer, Preparedness Services, retired from the provincial government on January 31, 2008. She joined the Government of Alberta in 1981.

Firefighter generosity continues

Kudos to the Calgary Firefighters Burn Treatment Society which donated \$500,000 to the Foothills Hospital Burn Unit in November 2007. The latest donation brings the society's total contribution to the burn unit to \$4.5 million. 🙌

To obtain a copy of the manual, visit www.cmhc.ca or contact: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 700 Montreal Road Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0P7
Phone: 1-800-668-2642
Fax: 1-800-245-9274

Local Fire Prevention Week promotion well done

It's official – the winners of the Alberta Weekly Newspaper Association Fire Prevention Week contest have been announced.

Each year the Fire Commissioner's Office of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency conducts a Fire Prevention Week contest for members of the Alberta Weekly Newspaper Association (AWNA). Three categories were available to reflect the varying distribution levels of weekly newspapers across Alberta.

The prizes, including the grand prize of \$1,500 towards the purchase of a computer, were awarded by Dave Hodgins, Managing Director of AEMA, and Ernie Polsom, Acting Fire Commissioner, on January 26 at the annual AWNA convention held at the Coast Terrace Inn in Edmonton. The Bonnyville Nouvelle also won the grand

The following first place winners received iPods:

Under 2,500	Fox Creek Times
2,501 - 5,000	Community Press
5,001 and over	Drumheller Valley Times

And the following papers received honourable mentions and certificates:

Under 2,500	Claresholm Local Press and Valleyview Valley News
2,501 - 5,000	Bonnyville Nouvelle and the Hinton Parklander
5,001 and over	Airdrie Echo and the Millet Pipestone Echo Flyer

prize. Congratulations to the winners and to all AWNA newspapers that entered the contest. We appreciate your support of Fire Prevention Week. 🔥

Update on HUSAR exercises

First-hand experience a good training tool

SIMULATION EXERCISES are a valuable tool for honing skills and experience in emergency situations, so it was a great honour for Ernie Polsom, Acting Fire Commissioner at AEMA, and Colin Lloyd, Director of Community Services, to engage in two Heavy Urban Search and Rescue (HUSAR) events over the past few months.

In October, Polsom and Lloyd flew to Winnipeg then Churchill, Manitoba to observe the Manitoba model for rescue.

"It was the first time that a civilian HUSAR team has been deployed predominantly by airplane," explained Polsom.

The exercise simulated a collapse at the old rocket range in Churchill. Equipment was deployed in two cargo aircraft with the team following in a third passenger plane. As Polsom explained, the primary purpose of their visit was to observe the deployment methods; the actual exercise was a secondary reason for being involved.

"It was a phenomenal experience," added Polsom. "We lived in tents on the tundra for two nights and observed the set up and organization of the camp. And, as the

exercise location was on a polar bear migratory route, armed guards were present and on the lookout for polar bears."

Polsom advised that one of the key outcomes of the experience was the realization that air deployment is not the most practical deployment model for a western Canada response.

"The complexities of loading an aircraft, including the limitations on the types of equipment and cargo that can be loaded on commercial aircraft, reinforced the effectiveness and efficiency of using road traffic for emergency deployments," stated Polsom.

"This was an excellent opportunity to observe a large scale, complex deployment of resources under challenging conditions," added Lloyd. "I came away with a strong



The command centre tent at the HUSAR exercise in Churchill Manitoba.

impression of a highly motivated and well led team that has been skillfully integrated to maximize the diversity of skills. As we seek to develop our own HUSAR capability in Alberta we will embody the same principles: through leadership and vision, galvanizing the best the volunteer sector has to offer into a coherent team capable of decisive and timely action in communities to resolve issues well beyond the capability of local resources."

Continued on next page >>

Following that experience, Polsom also attended the National HUSAR exercise near the Toronto International Airport on November 22 - 24, 2007. The exercise simulated a building collapse in a high rise hotel. The Toronto HUSAR team was able to utilize the Constellation Hotel, slated for demolition, to stage the simulations. The hotel and its disarray offered up a tremendously realistic experience while maintaining a safe working environment for the various teams to train in. This exercise provided an opportunity to experience the interoperability of the five national teams as well as the first deployment of the National Office of the Health Emergency Response Team (NOHERT).



Participants of the HUSAR exercise pose in front of an Inukshuk.

"The simulation was far reaching, including the building collapse and removal of materials to the triage of patients. It was also a proud moment for western Canada with the use of four of Calgary's dog teams, which have been qualified to work at the national level," stated Polsom.



HUSAR participants set up the command centre tent at the HUSAR exercise in Churchill Manitoba.

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